



42nd Infantry Division - Operation Iraqi Freedom 3 News

DISPATCH

Volume 16

June 12, 2005

Task Force Liberty Soldiers help improve life for Iraqis

Story and photo by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE O'RYAN, Balad, Iraq – Soldiers from Task Force Liberty are working to improve the way of life for Iraqis near Balad while also teaching them to develop reconstruction projects on their own.

Task Force 1-128 is helping local villages to facilitate projects that will aid them in getting clean drinking water, renovating their schools, improving their agriculture and receiving supplies for their medical clinics.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, Wisconsin Army National Guard, and Troop K, 3rd Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Tennessee Army National Guard, make up TF 1-128 and are actively working to train and prepare the local Iraqi security forces and

government officials to take control of everyday operations in Iraq.

Helping the locals with projects of this nature allows the Iraqis to see that Coalition Soldiers are not here to occupy their country, but to assist them in improving their way of life, said Sgt. 1st Class Jean Briggs, a civil affairs team leader with the 411th Civil Affairs Battalion, from Danbury, Conn.

"They have been neglected for 35 years and our job is to show them that we are here to help them and let them know that we are not here to dictate how they run their lives," Briggs said. "The majority of the people seem to realize that we are here to help. I would say 90 percent of them are appreciative and willing to help us help them."

"The majority of the projects the Soldiers do are humanitarian in nature and are geared towards Iraq's future," said Capt. Paul Shannon, a native

of Clarksville, Tenn., and commander of Troop K.

"The young Iraqi children are the ones who are going to make the future of Iraq a success," he said. "We are talking 10 to 15 years down the road. The education of the ones in the elementary, primary and high schools of today... is first and foremost our priority."

Shannon said his Soldiers are not conducting large reconstruction projects; they are just trying to improve the villages a little bit at a time.

"It is not much," he said. "I am not building entire schools at this point. I am just basically fixing roofs that leak, providing fresh water tanks for the children, small things of that nature."

The Task Force's Soldiers have been helping improve a water treatment plant, the roof of a school and local clinics, but soon they will be turning these types of missions over to the city council and local security forces, Shannon said.

"I keep telling them my time here is limited," Shannon said. "They need to take advantage of it and help me facilitate these projects and work with us to learn how a government is supposed to work, so when I am gone, they are able to facilitate their own projects."

Because Iraqi officials will be taking over, one thing Shannon said his Soldiers are trying to do is let the Iraqi people see that their elected officials and military personnel care about their well being.

"I try to put somewhat of an Iraqi face on it," Shannon said. "We are trying to get away from the Coalition doing everything for the Iraqi government and are trying to get the Iraqi army involved."

Shannon said the local government officials and soldiers are doing well, but they still have more to learn before Coalition Forces turn over operations to them.

"The Iraqi government is just not quite there yet," Shannon said. "They are making leaps and bounds every day. Eventually, they will take care of their own infrastructure. Right now we are just trying to give them a little boost."



A young Iraqi girl solves a math problem on the chalkboard at an all girls school near Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, Balad, Iraq. Soldiers from Task Force 1-128 have been helping to renovate the school.

Task Force Liberty Soldiers distribute school supplies, clothing



Pvt. Adam Rodriguez, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, hands out new clothes and a stuffed animal to an Iraqi girl during a joint patrol, near Balad, Iraq. Company C, distributed more than 60 boxes of clothes, shoes and school supplies they had received from people back in the United States.

Story and Photo by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE O'RYAN, BALAD, Iraq- Soldiers from Task Force 1-128 and the Iraqi army took a day off from their normal security patrols and handed out school supplies, clothes and shoes to the Iraqi populace in a few small villages during a combat patrol near Balad, Iraq.

"It is kind of sad to see kids running around with no shoes or half the kids you see don't wear shirts or have pants on and they're all dirty," said Pvt. Adam Rodriguez, 2nd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment. "It's stuff you never see back

home, so it feels good to help them out."

Task Force 1-128 is comprised of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, and A Company, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, from the Wisconsin Army National Guard and Troop K, 3rd Battalion, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment from the Tennessee Army National Guard.

The Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, along with the 4th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Division of the Iraqi army, and distributed more than 60 boxes of goods containing more than 100 pairs of shoes, assorted clothes and hundreds of pounds of school supplies such as pens, pencils, notebooks and paper to children

and families in the villages of Albouhaswa, Ahmed Hajam, and Ja'afar Jalaby.

"We tried to go to villages in the low-lying areas that aren't used to the Coalition Forces being around," said Sgt. 1st Class Craig Bailey, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment. "You could clearly see when we were giving them the gifts they were shocked, surprised and happy. I heard one woman remark 'thank you Allah' for the gifts."

Having soldiers from the Iraqi army alongside while passing out the supplies helped to build a relationship between the people and their army as the Iraqis look to build a new country based on democracy.

"What was important about this mission was it was a joint mission with the Iraqis," said Sgt. Edward Johnson, 2nd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment. "The Iraqi army seems very excited by the prospect of a brighter future for this country. Anything we can do to help them in learning how to fight, but also learning how to take care of their own people, is well worth the effort."

Soldiers from Company C started writing home asking for donations to distribute to the Iraqi people when they arrived at Forward Operating Base O'Ryan in December and have been taken aback by how much they have received in six months.

"I've been pleasantly surprised by the amount of support we've received from the American population at large back home," said Johnson. "We literally have received hundreds of boxes and care packages from churches, schools, veteran's organizations, Boy Scouts and a variety of other individual citizens."

Some packages came from military installations overseas and from people and companies the Soldiers hadn't even solicited.

"The Boy Scouts of Japan sent us more than 40 boxes of school supplies, as they literally cleaned out the whole post exchange at Camp Zama and Yakota Air Base of school supplies. Some company in Wisconsin, without us even asking, sent 40 or 50 boxes of brand new shoes, backpacks, school supplies and so on," added Johnson, who lives and works at Camp Zama, Japan, but is a native of Hinkley, Minn.

The Soldiers hope to have more opportunities to dispense needed goods as they only passed out a quarter of the boxes they have.

"The children are the future of this country and if we can plant some real positive seeds with them it will pay off in dividends for us," said Johnson.

Task Force Liberty Soldiers train Iraqi army hand-to-hand combatives techniques

Story by 116th Brigade Combat Team

FOB WARRIOR, Iraq – Soldiers from the 116th Brigade Combat Team's Task Force 1-163 Infantry are bringing their skill to bear to train Iraqi security forces as they prepare them to take over security operations in Iraq.

The war in Iraq has evolved from mostly tracking and capturing insurgents to a multi-faced mission that includes training the Iraqi army and Police forces. As the Army fulfills its expanded mission, members of National Guard units are often finding themselves in unique positions to draw on their civilian skills to help with this process.

Sgt. Scott Brady and Sgt. Mike Baker, both of TF 1-163 Infantry, are two such soldiers. Drawing on skills and experiences from their civilian lives, they have volunteered

to help teach Iraqi forces hand-to-hand combat and defensive tactics procedures.

"The three-day class was an introductory course designed to give the soldiers a set of basic skills they can use right away on the streets of their cities and towns," said Brady.

Both Brady and Baker are trained martial artists who jumped at the chance when superior officers mentioned a desire to see the local security forces receive some kind of defensive training.

"I have trained with quite a few police officers back in Montana, where we're from," Brady said. "Almost every one of them has a story about how the defensive tactics they learned in the academy helped to save them when the going got tough. We wanted these guys to have some of those same capabilities."

There were a total of 21 soldiers in the first group who spent two hours a day for three days working primarily on defensive techniques in two-man teams.

According to Brady, this course offered a welcome break for the soldiers from the more traditional classes on basic marksmanship, map reading and first aid skills that all Iraqi security forces are going through.

"We try to keep the classes fun," said Baker. "It helps keep everyone safe and also gives these guys a chance to move around a little bit and build some camaraderie with each other."

Brady and some of his Iraqi counterparts have ended up with scrapes on their faces and black eyes while practicing the procedures.

"This emphasizes to the students just how powerful some of these techniques can be," said Brady.